

DISCOURSE.

C. BALL.

1952

A

DISCOURSE.

DELIVERED AT
THE CHAPEL, AT ST. THOMAS'S MOUNT,
Sunday
ON ~~SATURDAY~~ THE 12th JULY, 1812,
THE DAY IMMEDIATELY
PRECEDING THE EXECUTION,
OF THE
THREE ARTILLERY PRIVATES,
FOR MURDER.

BY THE REV. C. BALL, D. D.
CHAPLAIN.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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1812.

Not more than a few hours intervened between the preparation and delivery of this Discourse ; the subject of Theology above all others is worthy of the most mature, and well digested study, and it would be unreasonable to expect in so hasty a composition the strength of learning or the grace of diction, the subject and occasion indeed, required nothing beyond plain language, and sound doctrine.

Had I printed it at my own spontaneous suggestion, something more than vanity might be attributed to me, sensible of its defects, diffidence would not allow me to invite public opinion ; but in this instance, I considered it fit and becoming to concede my own option to the recommendation of others, who thought the Publication might be beneficial, should it prove in the least so to those for whom it was chiefly composed, I shall have no reason to regret this very humble effort of my ministerial duty.

C. B.

Madras, 15th August, 1812.

ERRATA.

Title Page, for Saturday,---read, *Sunday*.

Page 6, line 12, for covenant,—read, *covenant*.

| | | |
|-----|-----|--|
| 12, | 8, | Who shaddeth,—read, Who so sheddeth. |
| | 16, | Manslaughter—committed,—read, Manslaughter— <i>though</i> committed. |
| | 17, | and though freed,—omit <i>though</i> . |
| | 23, | reverted,—read, <i>reversed</i> . |
| 19, | 7, | the souls,—read, the <i>soul</i> . |
| 21, | 12, | trammels,—read, <i>trammels</i> . |
| 22, | 9, | effect,—read, <i>affect</i> . |
| 26, | 9, | its patrons,—read, <i>their patrons</i> . |
| 28, | 14, | thy servants,—read, <i>of thy servants</i> . |



A

DISCOURSE

&c. &c. &c.

2d CORR. 5th CHAP: former part of 11th Verse.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade Men.

THE Great Apostle of the Gentile World in promulgating the Holy Gospel amongst those nations which he had converted, or was about to convert to Christianity, evinced the most earnest zeal, and unremitting diligence in the prosecution of his labours, but sensible of the difficulties to be encountered in this arduous undertaking, and how much would be required of the followers in the Ministry, for the beneficial extension of the word of GOD, constantly enforced on their minds and practice, both by his eminent example, and enlightened

instructions, the awful responsibility attached to their Holy calling. Amongst his divers exhortations to Timothy, he charges him in his second Epistle, in the most impressive language, and by the most pious appeal, to the duties of his Discipleship, "I charge thee-- before GOD, and the LORD JESUS CHRIST---Preach the world, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." ---Though St. Paul was at all times, ardently and actively engaged in this sacred commission, boldly opposing by Gospel truths, the Idolatry and superstition of the age, and building up the Christian covenant upon the weakness of the law sacrifices, abrogated on CHRIST's birth, yet, to check the growth of those discordant and fluctuating opinions, which Polytheism had produced, one saying, "I am of PAUL," another, "I of APOLLOS"--- and to prevent the aspersions of the enemies of the Gospel, had he shewn, a disposition to propagate doctrines of his own invention, was ever careful of exhibiting, a "Zeal according to knowledge," for, says he, "we preach not ourselves, but CHRIST JESUS our LORD, and ourselves your servants for his sake." In confirmation of this, his Epistles are distinguished for a clear

and discriminating judgment between the true and false Teachers of Religion. "By their fruits ye shall know them;"---and his admonitions are equally directed against the "enticing words of man's wisdom"---" Beware lest any man spoil you through Philosophy, "and vain deceit, after the tradition of Men, after the "rudiments of the world, and not after CHRIST."

This rigid and scrupulous adherence to the prescribed doctrines of CHRIST gave strength and genuineness to his writings. Convinced himself by divine inspiration, of the excellency of Christianity, he displayed an unwearied solicitude to publish for the edification of all nations, the tenor of its faith, and the glad tidings of salvation. His own immaculate life, from the period of his conversion, an eminent instance of the power of righteousness, could not but cherish his hopes when extended in contemplation on the rewards and punishments of a future state, but this did not satisfy his enlarged Charity, to have withheld the communication of those threatenings and encouragements applied throughout the Holy Scriptures, to accountable creatures, that none through ignorance, might be lost, he would have deemed a criminal negligence, "For we

“ must all appear at the judgment seat of CHRIST, that “ every one may receive the things done in his body “ whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore, the “ terror of the LORD we persuade Men.” How powerfully and authoritatively ought the example of this illustrious Preacher of righteousness to actuate the Christian Ministry, of every persuasion.

Farther, JESUS CHRIST on the appointment of his disciples enjoined them to “ go into all nations and preach the Gospel”---positive injunctions of the same nature are imposed by the same discipline, on the whole Priesthood, who are amenable, as “ Ministers of CHRIST, “ and stewards of the mysteries of GOD, even unto the “ ends of the world,” no absolute command, nor ordinance of Divine authority can be discarded without a dangerous culpability, and hence arises the obligation of directing our attention “ to those channels most in need of the refreshing aid of living waters.”

What occasion then, can call upon us more properly than the present one, for the performance of this duty, ---what theme can kindle a devotion more sincere, or dictate supplications more fervent, than when we are assembled together to deprecate the wrath of ALMIGHTY

God, against three of our miserable fellow Creatures, now under the condemnation of Death, for a transgression the vilest in the penal Code,---In the primitive ages of the world, Fire, Famine and the Sword, were the frequent engines of Almighty wrath, sent forth to scourge the land for its wickedness;---to preserve from violation the Holy Laws of God, the Old and New Testament declare with no "small voice," the severe denunciations of God---"The LORD's voice crieth unto "the City: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it"---but alas! Sin, like the baneful Hydra, in defiance, as it were, of Omnipotent Power, hath raised its head aloft throughout every habitable region of the Globe, and History both sacred and profane bear record, that the dispensations of Providence however awful, have failed to stem the waters of iniquity, which from the creation of the world, have marked their irruptive course, with desolation and dismay, every succeeding generation having like the impious Pharaoh, amidst the plagues of Egypt "hardened their hearts, and sinned "yet more and more."

If the restraints on sin are so feeble where the judgments are so mighty, and the hand that inflicts them so

visible, can we wonder at the inefficacy of subordinate controul in the moral Government of the World, yet, how much more miserable would be our condition, if human laws were not enacted to secure the blessings of civilized life, and prevent infraction on the Divine.

That virtue and vice might not be left to conjecture, the sacred Decalogue enumerates the crimes expressly forbidden by GOD himself, “knowing therefore the terror of the LORD we persuade Men,” that is, we use arguments best calculated to arouse the guilty to a vigilant correction of evil, and to deter the innocent from the practise of it.

This is the mode of ST. PAUL’s instruction, which bears no equivocal interpretation---it demands zeal and activity amidst the overflowings of profligacy, to preserve the empire of virtue, and demolish the daemon of sin.

To explore the whole volume of guilt, to expatiate on its complications and excesses would be neither edifying nor expedient, the particular crime now to be discussed, is so indelibly marked with turpitude, that the sensibilities of our nature are alive to the fullest impression, without the aid of a magnifying medium.

Before we investigate the Holy Scriptures on crime

and punishment, it behoves me to mention, a truth, which I vouch for on positive evidence, viz. that prior to the establishment of the Court of Criminal Judicature at Madras, an horrible opinion had prevailed amongst some most dissolute and abandoned Characters, that the depriving a native of life had no criminality in it: * that any one in the human ~~form~~^{shape} could form an opinion so impious, is scarcely credible---but I should prostitute my pen, debase your understandings, and scandalize your principles, to enter on a refutation of an opinion condemned by the dictates of every man's conscience, neither condition, climate, nor complexion can under any shade, or pretence, sanction the shedding of innocent blood.

If we survey the wide extended range of mortal depravities, from the smallest misdemeanor, up to criminality of the deepest dye, we shall discover no guilt of so high a nature as that of blood. God implanted the love of life in man for the best and wisest purposes, and the preservation of being, the first law of nature, supersedes every other, when the powers of reason first

* This horrid circumstance, an European Soldier, under condemnation of Death, communicated to me when I attended him in Goal in the year 1802.

begin to operate on the mind, and impel it into action. Even instinctive impulse follows the same law in the brute creation.

In referring as proposed, to the Divine Institutes, from which human laws derive their origin, the dreadful and irreversible decree of the Almighty against murder stands foremost in the list of punishments---“Who sheddeth Man’s blood, by Man shall his blood be shed;” and throughout the Jewish Code, framed for God’s chosen people of Israel, it falls under the severest lash of condemnation. Amongst the numerous expiatory sacrifices, and sin offerings of the Priests, and People, recorded in the book of Leviticus, no commutation for this crime appears, “blood for blood” is the denunciation---“He that killeth any Man shall surely be put to Death”---Even Manslaughter---committed in perfect ignorance, and though freed from any criminal intention, came under the penalty of the law:---Banishment from Home and City---“He that smiteth a Man so that he die, though he lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand, then will I appoint thee a place whither he shall flee”---and this sentence could not be reverted---“For if the Slayer shall at any time come

without the border of the City of his refuge whither he was fled, and the revenger of blood shall kill the slayer, he shall not be guilty of blood, because he should have remained in the city of his refuge, until the death of the High Priest". The above are indisputable testimonies of the divine displeasure in respect to the shedding of blood; under the Jewish œconomy, ignorance did not entirely wipe away its ignominy, and retributive justice alone could cleanse the land from its defilement. But in the history of Cain, before Moses put in force the positive laws of God, nature declared aloud the heinousness of this sin, after he had slain his brother, and God had pronounced the curse on him, "When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength, a fugitive and vagabond thou shalt be." The conscience of this first murderer was ~~not to be~~ lulled into quietude, it spoke bitter things against him, "There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked,"---haunted by fearful apprehensions he said "it shall come to pass that every one that seeth me shall slay me." Shall then the sole and exclusive prerogative of God, the power over life and death be invaded; shall his laws, stamped with divine prohibi-

tion, be trampled upon by his sinful and presumptuous creatures? Who can plead the cause of the transgressor, whose will conspires to the atrocious deed, and whose hand executes it with relentless cruelty? What atonement can be offered, what reconciliation made with an offended God? Alas! no intercession can avail, no human compensation reach the enormity of the crime---the blood only of the immaculate Lamb, shed for the sins of whole world, can expiate the guilt.

All crimes are capable of aggravation, and the heinousness of them increased, or diminished, in proportion to their magnitude, and the malignity of their effects. In a cursory review of the deplorable circumstances we are bewailing, this enquiry is demanded. As a Man, surrounded with infirmities like yourselves, it would ill become me to embitter the last moments of these miserable men by a harsher representation of their crimes than the laws of God and man affix to them; as a Christian, sensible how much I stand in need with you, of God's mercy, and CHRIST's atonement, for the remission of sins, I must be disposed to ameliorate their sufferings, but as a Minister of the Gospel, my keenest feelings are to bend to the painful, but superior duty

of my calling, otherwise, I should practice a dangerous dissimulation, by crying "peace, peace, where there is no peace," useless to them, and criminal in me.

The intermediate space between the sentence and execution of the law for this crime, is very limited---they are on the verge of eternity, and before the exchange of life for death takes place, have a most momentous concern to close, even a "death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness," if they look for salvation. To dissemble any longer is to increase their danger :---unless the fetters of sin are indissoluble, & their hearts hardened against all remonstrance, they will prostrate themselves with the lowliest humility, and sincerest penitence before their offended maker and judge, and exclaim individually "God be merciful to me a sinner!"---the horrid perpetration of the deed is enough of itself to sink them into despair without any criminal accessory---at this awful moment let them be aware, though equivocation or concealment may deceive Men, "that after all this," God who knoweth the heart, "shall bring them into judgment"--the infliction of their punishment needs no justification of "Thou art the Man" who plunged the fatal weapon into the breast of a fellow Crea-

ture---in crimes of a much fainter complexion in the scale of comparative evil, the law makes no distinction, between the person who commits, and he who consents, and is privy to the crime.

The sacred authorities already vouched, and resorted to in support of the punishment of murder are conclusive; but the peculiar aggravation in the present instance, I cannot pass over in silence, the recital will not be useless if it increases your abhorrence, or arrests the hand from wanton cruelty, even in the prosecution of guilt.---Here then we behold the complication of crime;---the violation of one precept of the Decalogue "Thou shalt not steal"---was instantly succeeded by another, that of murder---the former act gratified the lawless spirit of rapine, the latter assuaged the inhuman thirst of blood---not in the phrensy of passion, but with a cowardice we should think the Soldier's bosom estranged to, they made a poor, aged, and unarmed man a victim of their wanton barbarity. The dawn of morning was not overcast, reflection brought no remorse, they arose like the "Giant refreshed with wine," and with daring effrontery, as though the laws of their Country were asleep, or a mere

dead letter, attempted to trafic the spoils wrenched from the mangled body of the deceased, even within the precinct where but a few hours before, they had imbruied their hands in the blood of the innocent.---But I can traverse no longer this scene of blood, sensations of horror arise---enough has been said to excite in us all the fullest detestation of guilt so accumulated, and unnatural.

Tomorrow---these miserable and lamented convicts are to undergo an ignominious death, awarded them by the verdict of a Jury, and the just and impartial Laws of their Country.---Tomorrow---their eyes are to be shut for ever on the present scene of things, and this world will be of no farther consequence to them:---it remains for us my Brethren, to implore God for the effusion of his grace upon their hearts, that awakened even at this late hour to the spirit of true contrition, and an alarming sense of their fearful situation, they may be led to an open and unreserved confession of their crimes, the only small reparation they can offer to the society they have so outrageously injured, and the laws of their Country they have so egregiously violated, and may God, who has no delight in the death of a sinner, have mer-

cy upon their souls. Let not us presume to circumscribe the boundary of the Great Jehovah's mercy, or to say here thou shalt come, and no farther, this would be pointing the dagger at our own bosoms, for where is the confidence of the most perfect but in the mercies of God:---CHRIST assured the thief on the cross, of the blessings of Paradise, which may in some degree, abate despair, but by no means encourage presumption.

The concluding obligation I have to perform is to address you my Brethren, in particular, who were late fellow comrades with these lost and miserable men; this I shall do in great plainness of speech, not in the studied ornaments of language, nor vain parade of words, so that being perfectly understood by all, "I may bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of "CHRIST." You then, who pursued together the same military career, whose duties and obligations to your Country were alike, and to whom the same care and protection of authority has been extended, you, cannot be indifferent to the devotions of this day---a most awful and impressive lesson is afforded for the exercise of your piety here, and private meditation on your return home; and I trust in Gon, that it may be

"grafted inwardly in your hearts, and bring forth the fruits of a holy and religious life" for the future.

Let the fatal and disgraceful termination of the existence of these your former associates, but now wretched criminals, be a solemn warning to all, especially to those who may be found disorderly amongst you---be ever careful to preserve that anchor of the soul, religion, which they having thrown away, are now shipwrecked, and about to perish. Be earnest in reforming your lives, and turning from the evil of your ways, submitting patiently to the will of God, in what he gives, or takes away. Perform all your sacred duties from the highest principle, the fear and love of God, not like the Pharisees, who sought their own interests only, in the ceremonial observances of the law. Be sober, honest, and temperate, excess is the parent of strife and disorder, generating into acts of violence, and not unfrequently ending in destruction. Be careful to avoid bad association, the very root of evil. The duties of your profession consist in obedience to those who command, respect for the Government which supports and maintains you, and a ready discharge of every service to which you may be appointed. It is not merely in

your military character that I offer these instructions, you are men amenable to the civil powers, for the breach of any of those laws framed for the general good of the community, and constitutional protection. Be warned to shun those vicious courses which ultimately lead to death, yes, to the fatal and untimely end of your unhappy Brethren--but whilst you deplore their fate, acknowledge the justice of the sentence,---for, if high crimes and misdemeanors were passed over with impunity, life and property would be no longer secure, but open to every lawless invader. In a word, both in your public and private station, suffer as little imperfection as possible, to intrude on your duties. "Continue faithful unto the end, and he will give thee a crown of life."---Perhaps you will inquire whether Man, degenerate as he is, being likely to deviate sometimes, from the rigorous laws of righteousness, in case of sudden surprise, or departure from the paths that lead unto life, is deprived of all hope, no, God in his infinite compassion to our infirmities, has been pleased to afford a refuge for the sincere penitent, not intending thereby to encourage wilful and deliberate transgression, on the prospect of forgiveness, but to save the inconsiderate sinner. But, as the efficacy of repentance is ever doubt-

ful if defered to age, sickness, or a death-bed, when cut off from good works, the surest evidence of sincerity, be instant in the amendment of your lives.

I must solicit your attention a few minutes longer, the present opportunity being so seasonable for the consideration of another subject, one of no inconsiderable importance, which I have much at heart, and though not intimately involved in this discourse, may not be in its ultimate consequences irrelative.* Public establishments for the religious education of indigent Youth are worthy of general encouragement: Whatever tends to guard them from the trammels of vice and intemperance, to counteract the fatal effects of uncontroled & licentious principles, & to render them useful, worthy and peaceable members of the community, is of public and private concern, because the good and prosperity of both are equally at issue. Frustate not my endeavours then, to obtain the serious, and something more than desultory attention of the parents of those Children who do now, or may at any future period, participate in the valuable advantages derivative of a pi-

* The parochial and Sunday School at St. Thomas's Mount established January 1812, patronised and supported by the voluntary subscription of the Commanding Officer and Inhabitants.

ous education, gratuitously afforded by the laudable beneficence of the inhabitants of this station. The glaring outrages recently committed within this small district, the bold and daring violation of subordinancy and controul, even by those who on the terms of their enlistment, consign their services to the disposal of the state, and submission to constitutional authorities, is a melancholy proof of increasing depravity. The awful spectacle we are to behold tomorrow, cannot fail I should hope, to effect most deeply the heart of every Parent, who has an Interest in the well doing of his Child. Natural affection, Reason, and Christian principle speak on this subject too audibly not to be heard, and admonish too distinctly not to be understood. To the total and unpardonable neglect of the early culture of righteous principles may be attributed the fatal degeneracy of mankind, and the progressive augmentation of the criminal Calendar. Can we reasonably expect that Children when arrived at maturity, will have a preference for the Christian, more than for any other system of religious designation, who throughout their childhood, have been left a prey to scepticism and infidelity. If not instructed, and catechised in the precepts of the

christian religion, nor the excellent doctrines of that Church of which they are members, explained to them when their faculties are first capable of being taught, for at this early season impressions are the strongest, we cannot look for consistency of principles, at an advanced period of life; should they worship at all, their devotions will be fortuitous, and the Bible, or Alcoran, indiscriminately professed, in subserviency to temporal advantages, to day, the God of Heaven, may be the object of their adoration, tomorrow the "Prophets of Baal, or the image which Nebuchadnezzar the King has set up." If accustomed for a course of years, to hear their fathers blaspheme, and revile the word of God, are they not likely to inherit the same principles? "A bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit." You will know that one of the sorest evils that can befall any man, who deserves the name of man, is an unworthy and wicked offspring, to avert that calamity, be persuaded to educate your children religiously, the most likely means of rendering them a benefit to society, happy in themselves, and a blessed reward for parental solicitude and protection---"Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from

it," is a maxim recommended by the wisest man--- "bind it for a sign upon thine hand that it may be a frontlet between thine eyes."--Implant in years of infancy, the Christian religion, permit not the whims of Sophistry to divert you from a principle so excellent, and revered, though opposed by a certain modern system of instruction. This system does not indeed, prohibit the Bible, but allows no distinct doctrines and discipline of the established Church, it excludes the profession of religious creeds however authenticated by the volume of the Holy Writ, or handed down through successive ages, as true and approved doctrines, upon the venerable and learned research of the ancient Fathers, or the laborious and enlightened investigation of the ablest Commentators, of Christian Theology, in modern times;--leaving the mind loose and unrestrained, and to the free adoption of sentiments on sacred subjects, congenial to themselves; transforming in a manner, like unto the Heathen Deities, the one Supreme God of Heaven, into an object of fanciful rather than of Holy unchangeable worship, most worthy of an eternal and immutable Being. In fact, substituting moral law for Divine Prescript, and asserting the supremacy of Reason, on the ruins of

Christian Faith ;---as though morals could carry weight and impression, unless founded on God's express mandate, relative to virtue and vice;---or Reason exercise her powers, without the aid of that Omnipotent Being, who ordained it to be the grand characteristic of man. ---If the general education of the Poor has not become a state question in our native land, happy for the people, it has at least caused a laudable and zealous exertion in the Prelacy, to establish Schools on a more approved and durable system, and for the promotion of which, large incorporated bodies have already contributed liberally. Let not their eminent examples be lost upon us, who, though in a far distant clime, it is to be hoped, still maintain the same amiable bias of heart and affection, in every Act of Christian love.---Amongst the numerous excitements to compassion, and the various obligations we have to perform towards each other, as dependent creatures, none can be found of greater importance, viewed either morally, politically, or religiously, than providing for the poor & needy, whether, for their mental defects, or corporeal exigencies. By the affection then you bear to your children, the care you have for their souls, and your own, I earnestly intreat, that this matter may become of more serious consideration.

Far be it from me to stand forth on any occasion, the willing accuser of my Brethren, but, to withhold needful observations may blast the designs of the best institutions. I cannot therefore, but lament the necessity I have to remark the unworthy requital made by many of the Relatives of these children towards those by whose laudable munificence the Sunday and parochial School were instituted here, their gratitude keeps no pace with the benevolence of its patrons. The Children are careless and inconstant in their attendance at Church, and School, and why? because their parents are perfectly regardless of all devotion, public, or private, make the subject of no importance, and their Children's neglect, no occasion of rebuke;---but suffer me to enforce on your attention, that if religion and their immortal souls bear any connection, and the injunction "work out your salvation with fear and trembling," sacred and binding, the omission on your part, in not doing the utmost in your power, for their eternal welfare, is criminal, and "the blood of their souls shall be charged on you"---for your carelessness and wilful neglect.

In pointing out the various modes by which the baneful effects of sin are communicated to the rising generation, particularly that defection of your parental

obligations in estranging your Children from religious knowledge, which if well and deeply implanted in the infant mind, is likely to form an armour of resistance against the weapons of wickedness, whether tainted with the poison of scepticism, or pointed with the keen edge of depraved example. In an exhortation of this nature, it might be partial and unfair in me not to mention the mutual obligations between us;---in reverting to the commencement of my discourse, it will appear, that I prefaced it with scriptural authorities on the aweful responsibility the ministers of the Church are under in publishing the Gospel of Christ: "Son of Man" says the Lord to the Prophet Ezekiel, "I have made thee watchman over the House of Israel, when I say unto the wicked, thou shall surely die, and thou givest them not warning, nor speaketh to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his soul, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand." The parable of the Shepherd and his flock in St. John, is of equal importance, respecting true apostleship, "knowing therefore, the terror of the Lord, we "persuade Men."

That I may not be wanting in warning you against the dangers to which you are liable in your spiritual

warfare, nor your remiss in attending to me, I do now my beloved Brethren, most sincerely beseech you to call to mind every exhortation I have delivered to you within this Sanctuary, whether in warnings against impiety, or exhortations to holiness, my endeavours though accompanied with weakness and infirmity, have been sincere; and for our several defects, in preaching, and hearing the word of God, we must humbly rely on His Goodness for Pardon. And may the seed sown bring forth an hundred fold.

And now O LORD GOD ! whose hands are the issues of life and death, mercy and judgement, vouchsafe in thy manifold and great mercies, to extend thine ear to the supplications thy servants now humbly offered up unto thy Divine Majesty, in behalf of these miserable sinners, who having violated thy sacred laws, and destroyed the work of thine hand, are about to suffer as the deserved Victims of insulted Justice, the ignominy of public execution: have mercy upon them O Heavenly Father! "have mercy upon them; for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake forgive them all that is past, renew a right spirit within them that they being cleansed from all corruptions of mind and body, may be received into thine everlasting Kingdom."